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1910

No. 199.

MISS DOULTON'S ORCHIDS

A Comedy in Two Acts

THE ACTING EDITION

BY

MARGARET CAMERON

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NEW YORK
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PUBLISHERS
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A Comedy in Two Acts.

Characters.

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CECILY BELKNAP.

BESS MAYNARD.

POLLY WINSLOW.

OWEN BELKNAP.

GORDON McALLISTER.

KENNETH MOORE, Belknap's Cousin.

THE HISTORY OF THE

REIGN OF

CHARLES THE FIRST

BY

JOHN BURNET

AND

JOHN HALL

IN TWO VOLUMES.

LONDON, Printed by J. Sturges, at the

Sign of the Sun in St. Dunstons Church, in Fleet-Street,

1704.

MISS MOULTON'S ORCHIDS.

ACT I

Morning

Living room of Belknap's country house. A door on the right, leading to a veranda, is open. Other doors at the back and on the left lead respectively to the hall and the library. The room is charmingly furnished, easy-chairs and a multitude of cushions giving evidence of constant and familiar occupancy. A framed photograph of Owen stands on a table up L., which also contains books and magazines.

CECILY BELKNAP, a smiling, vivacious, gracious young matron of twenty-five; is discovered sitting down L., in confidential chat with BESS MAYNARD, a spinster of thirty, whose mildly cynical point of view is indicated by a slightly satirical smile and contradicted by the quick sympathy of her glance. Both wear cotton morning gowns. CECILY is sewing and BESS holds an open book in her hand.

CECILY (*continuing conversation*). And Polly declares she's going home next week. I hope she hasn't quarrelled with Ken, but I can't think of anything else that should send her off in this sudden fashion.

BESS. I thought she was going to stay another month.

CECILY. So did I, until this morning. I'm sure that was her intention when she came, and I can't

think of anything that can have happened except, as I say, she may have quarrelled with Ken.

BESS (*rising and going to door R.*). Well, if she has there are symptoms of a reconciliation, for she has just appeared in the garden and he is racing down the walk to overtake her.

CECILY (*springing up to look out*). Really? Oh, good! I do wish those two would make a match!

BESS (*coming down R.*). I wonder what there is in the early stages of matrimony that infects all women with the match-making microbe? Nobody seems to escape.

CECILY. It's because we want to see all our friends as happy as we are. Bess (*wistfully*), aren't you ever going to marry?

BESS (*cheerfully*). Well, not until I'm asked, anyway.

CECILY (*coming down briskly*). Oh, nonsense! You've refused nearly every man you know! I asked Gordon McAllister why he hadn't proposed to you——

BESS. Cecily!

CECILY (*lightly*). Oh, you know Gordon proposes to everybody! He said that no man voluntarily bored a woman with repetitions, and that it was understood that all known forms of proposal had been exhausted upon you without effect.

BESS (*with dignity*). Really, Cecily, you must not——

CECILY (*airily*). Now, don't mount your prancing steed in that fashion. At home it was perfectly understood that Gordon should propose to all the girls every summer. It was part of the programme for the season—and, I must say, he does it well! We used to wonder, sometimes, what he'd do if one of us should accept him. I threatened to do it once, just for fun, but Owen came that summer, and I forgot it.

BESS (*drily*). Then, Mr. McAllister is a sort of sentimental reservoir, is he? Always on tap?

CECILY. Exactly! come to think of it, Bess, I believe you're the only unmarried woman he has ever

known to whom he hasn't proposed. I wonder if it means anything?

BESS (*crossing with a short laugh*). Cecily, you are incorrigible! Oh, here comes Polly,

Enter from the hall POLLY WINSLOW, an impulsive, tender-eyed, radiant girl of twenty-two, carrying a handful of letters. She is followed almost immediately by OWEN BELKNAP, a tall, vigorous, well-knit man of thirty, and GORDON McALLISTER, a bachelor of thirty-eight, shrewd, genial, kindly. The men carry the morning papers. OWEN sits, down L. GORDON joins BESS, C.

POLLY. The boy has just brought the mail. Here are two for you, Cecily, and three for me, and one for —Mr. Moore.

CECILY (*at window, calling*). Ken! Oh, Ken! Here's a letter for you.

(KENNETH MOORE, *an impulsive, good-natured, quick, boyish fellow of twenty-four, appears in the doorway leading to the veranda.*)

KENNETH. A letter for me? Who from?

CECILY. How should we know? (KENNETH *takes the letter and opens it, with a murmured apology. He perches on arm of chair near OWEN, down L. CECILY sighs as she reads her mail.*) Oh, me! Another bridge party! That makes three next week!

BESS. That's because you're so incorruptibly accommodating, Cecily. I never play bridge.

GORDON. Is that because you are never willing to expose your hand, Miss Maynard?

BESS. At least, I prefer to reserve the right to play it myself.

KENNETH. I say! This letter's from Fred Grover.

POLLY (*looking up from her letters, takes him up after "Grover."*) Fred Grover? Isn't he the man who's in love with Marie Doulton?

BESS (C.) (*mischievously glancing at OWEN and KENNETH, down L. who frown uneasily*). The man? Has anybody arrived at the distinction of being *the* man? Did ever any man know Marie Doulton without falling in love with her?

OWEN (*aside to KEN.*) Oh, what's the use of raking up old skeletons?

CECILY. Why, you knew her, didn't you, Owen, before she went on the stage?

OWEN (*carelessly*). Yes. Yes, of course; I knew her. (BESS *conceals a smile*.)

CECILY. There, Bess! There's one man.

BESS (*sauntering down L.*) Oh, well—she wasn't an actress then. That makes all the difference in the world, you know. (OWEN and KENNETH *throw her relieved glances*).

KENNETH (*aside to BESS, placing chair for her*). You're a good fellow, Bess, if you are a tease! (*He oins POLLY*).

POLLY (*half absorbed in her mail*). They say Fred Grover has completely lost his heart.

KENNETH. And his head as well, if I'm any judge. He says she's coming here——

BESS. Is she? I didn't know that.

KENNETH. Yes, she opens in town to-night, and Fred says——

POLLY (*taking him up on "Fred"*). Is she as beautiful as people say? I've never seen her.

BESS. She's the most beautiful woman I ever saw—and the most fascinating.

GORDON. You know her? You're fond of her.

BESS. I went to school with her!

GORDON (*with enthusiasm*). Let's all go to see her!

OWEN (*laughing*). "The ruling passion"! It's no use, Gordon! She's adamant. Wealth, position, titles, love, separately and in combination, have all failed to tempt her from the stage.

GORDON. I suppose one may look at her? Can she act?

KENNETH. Can she act! Good heavens, man, where have you lived? She had New York literally at her feet last season.

GORDON. That's no criterion. I ask you, can she *act?*

OWEN. She can! All together, now! (*Waves his arms.*)

OWEN, KENNETH, CECILY, BESS (*in unison, laughing*). She—can!

OWEN. Now, are you satisfied?

GORDON. Entirely. When shall we go to see her! I'll get a box.

CECILY. To-morrow night?

GORDON. To-morrow night. I'll 'phone for seats at once.

CECILY. Don't get a stage-box, Gordon. One never sees anything but the audience, and the prompter in the flies.

GORDON. You come and conduct the negotiations, then.

CECILY. Very well. Come on, girls, we'll all go and superintend Gordon's order.

(*BESS, CECILY, POLLY and GORDON troop out to the hall, laughing and chatting as they go.*)

KENNETH. Say, Owen, haven't you ever told Cecily about your affair with Marie?

OWEN. Well—er—no. You see, it wouldn't do any particular good, and it might worry her, so—

KENNETH (*thoughtfully*). H'm. Yes, I suppose so. Well (*laughing*) Fred seems to be going the usual pace. He wants me to—

(*As he says "He wants—" enter CECILY from the hall with a telegram, which she hands to OWEN.*)

CECILY (*as she enters, interrupting on "wants"*). Here's a message for you, Owen, marked "rush."

OWEN. Wonder what's up now? (*He reads the tele-*

gram.) Oh, it's from that fellow up at Centerville. He's in hot water again. You'll have to go up immediately, Ken. (CECILY goes out.)

KENNETH. Confound him! He's more trouble than he's worth. I wish you'd take that business away from him, Owen.

OWEN (*looking at his watch*). If you hurry you'll get the nine-thirty.

KENNETH (*resignedly*). All right. I wanted to take Polly to the links to-day, too!

OWEN. Well, run along! You've only twelve minutes to catch that train.

KENNETH. All right. (*He stops in the doorway*). Oh, by Jove, I forgot! Owen, you'll be in town to-day, won't you? Run into Bauer's and order the finest bunch of roses you can find—five dozen American Beauties—unless there are others more expensive. If there are get *them*—five dozen of them—and send them, with this card—(*feels in his pockets*) what the deuce did I do with the thing? Oh! here it is!

OWEN. To Polly?

KENNETH. No; to Marie Doulton. There's the address (*scribbling on the envelope in which the card is enclosed*). Don't forget, on your life, or you'll get me into no end of a scrape! (*Tosses envelope to OWEN and hurries to the door.*)

OWEN. But I say, Ken! Hold on! You don't mean—

KENNETH (*watch in hand*). Yes, I do! Never mind the price. Get them, sure! Good-bye. (*Runs off.*)

OWEN (*in doorway*). But, Ken, hold on!

KENNETH (*outside*). That's all right. I'll miss that train! (OWEN turns the envelope over in his hands, shaking his head dubiously).

Enter CECILY, POLLY, and BESS from the library.

CECILY. Gordon's waiting for you to go to the links, Owen.

OWEN (*shortly*). Can't. I'm going to town.

CECILY. To town? I thought you and Ken were going to stay over all day to-day.

OWEN. We were, but Ken's been called to Center-ville, and I've got to go to town to attend to—some business. (*He looks distastefully at the envelope in his hand.*)

CECILY. Well, go and tell Gordon, then. He's waiting. (*OWEN goes out.*)

(*CECILY, POLLY and BESS dispose themselves comfortably in easy-chairs.*)

CECILY (*to POLLY*). Well, why you insist, all at once, upon going home, I don't see!

BESS. Nor I. Isn't your bed good?

CECILY. Isn't the weather perfect?

BESS. Aren't we agreeable?

CECILY. And the men attentive? Ken's your shadow, and I'm sure, Owen fairly dotes upon you!

POLLY. You don't seem to object.

CECILY. Well, mercifully, I'm not jealous—of my friends.

POLLY (*curiously*). Are you jealous of anybody?

CECILY. No. That is—why, no, of course not! Jealousy and vulgarity are synonymous terms. I trust neither applies to me.

POLLY. I'm so glad you feel that way, dear! It's so—*common*—to be jealous! Besides, I can't imagine a girl marrying a man unless she could trust him absolutely, in the face of everything, can you?

BESS (*in laughing accusation*). Polly, you're in love!

POLLY (*much confused*). Why, Bess, what nonsense!

CECILY (*complacently*). Well, of course, I never cared for anybody but OWEN—

BESS (*groaning*). "The only man I ever loved!"

CECILY (*indignantly*). Well, he is! And nothing could ever make me the least little speck jealous of Owen. He honestly believes that I'm the only perfect woman in the world. You know, girls, it sometimes frightens me to think what might happen if he should

discover, some day, that I'm only an ordinary sort of person, after all.

POLLY (*gravely nodding*). I know. One wonders how long one can live up to it.

BESS (*mischievously*). You know, I wonder if it isn't better not to marry at all, than to live in constant dread of falling off one's pedestal.

CECILY. Oh, my, no!

POLLY. Oh, no, Bess!

CECILY. It deprives one of so much, not to marry.

POLLY (*impulsively*). Girls—— (*She stops as suddenly as she began.*)

CECILY. Well?

POLLY. Oh, nothing.

BESS. Go on, Polly. It racks the nerves to be excited that way, and then held in suspense.

POLLY (*confused*). No, I—it's nothing. I thought I'd say something—but I changed my mind.

CECILY. I hope you were going to say that you've decided not to go home. Polly, why don't you stay?

POLLY. Oh, I can't! There's so much to do!

BESS. To do! What on earth have you to do? If ever there was a lily of the field, it's Polly Winslow!

POLLY. Oh, there's sewing, you know, and——

CECILY. Sewing! *You?*

BESS. My prophetic soul! I knew it!

POLLY (*half-defiantly*). What?

BESS (*rising*). It's a trousseau! You've been going and getting engaged!

CECILY (*jumping up*). Polly! Have you?

POLLY (*rising*). Y-y-yes, but—— (*CECILY embraces her rapturously; BESS more calmly.*)

CECILY. When, Polly? When?

POLLY. Last night—in the garden. But how did you know, Bess?

BESS (*mysteriously*). I have missed my vocation. I should have been a detective—or a clairvoyant. The past explained and the future revealed (*leans toward POLLY and solemnly plucks a hair from her head*) from

a single hair of your head!

POLLY. Yes, but Bess——!

BESS (*with exaggerated air of mystery*). There are no secrets I cannot penetrate, no mysteries I cannot solve! In addition to keen perceptive faculties and unflinching deductive ability, I am the possessor of occult powers of a high order.

POLLY (*laughing*). No, but really, how did you know? We thought we had been so careful!

BESS (*with affected solemnity*). When a young person of your tastes, disposition, and general friskiness begins suddenly to talk down to her elders on the subjects of connubial confidence, the ideals of marriage, a life of unselfish surrender and kindred topics, it is safe to assume, without further evidence, that she is bending her neck to the yoke. (*Suddenly matter-of-fact.*) And when, in addition to that, a crabbed and middle-aged spinster happens to be sitting quietly in the dark end of the veranda when the contracting parties are approaching the critical moment, and sees—— (*pauses mischievously.*)

POLLY (*breathlessly*). Bess, you weren't! You didn't!

BESS. Well, at any rate, I didn't talk about it. I couldn't escape, but I shut my eyes and put my fingers in my ears.

POLLY. Did you, Bess? Did you, really?

BESS. Indeed, I did! I should hate to feel myself an accessory before the fact! So I stopped my ears, shut my eyes——and held my tongue.

POLLY (*embracing her*). Oh, you dear! (*As an afterthought.*) Oh, Bess! You were alone, weren't you? Mr. McAllister wasn't with you?

BESS (*turning away*). How absurd! *You* didn't hear any conversation, did you?

POLLY. Oh, of course, if he'd been there, you would have been talking! Besides, you're not the sort of girl to sit in dark corners with men, anyway.

CECILY (*laughing*). No, for when she does, they

always propose to her. She's grown wary.

BESS (*annoyed*). Don't be silly, Cecily!

Enter OWEN.

CECILY. Owen, what do you think? Polly and Ken are engaged!

OWEN (*joyfully*). Engaged! Are they? (*Looks blank*). The dickens they are!

POLLY. Why? What's the matter?

OWEN (*dissembling*). Matter? Nothing's the matter. Why?

CECILY. What made your look so funny?

OWEN. Did I look funny? I suppose a fellow may be allowed a moment of surprise?

CECILY (*incredulously*). Surprise! At this?

OWEN. Precisely. However we may have anticipated the moment, the announcement was rather—unexpected.

POLLY. Well?

BESS (*dryly*). You seem to have missed your cue, Owen. You are expected to effervesce.

OWEN (*cordially to Polly*). Oh! I'm delighted, of course! Delighted!

POLLY (*pouting*). You don't look it!

OWEN (*taking her hands affectionately*). But I am! You know this has been my dearest wish for both of you. When did it come off?

POLLY (*shyly*). Last night.

OWEN (*startled suddenly releases her hands*). Last night? Only last night?

POLLY (*whimsically*). Now what's the matter?

OWEN (*quickly*). Oh, nothing! But if I were Ken and had become engaged to you last night—

POLLY. Well?

OWEN. I wouldn't do what Ken's doing to-day.

CECILY. But you sent him to Centerville yourself.

OWEN. I know I did. I'm sorry. Come along out in the garden with me, Cecily, and let me tell you how sorry I am. But he didn't tell me, the chump!

(OWEN and CECILY go out.)

POLLY (*looking after them*). Now, what has happened to him? Last week he told me that if I refused Ken, he'd never forgive me—and now look at him! What is the matter with him?

BESS (*lightly*). Haven't you learned yet that when you give a man what he wants, he doesn't want it at all, and has his heart set on something quite different?

POLLY (*laughing*). You miserable old cynic! Here comes Mr. McAllister. *I'm* going to write letters.

BESS (*hurriedly*). Oh, no, Polly, don't! Stay here with me!

POLLY. Not I! I believe that man's in love with you, and I'm no fifth wheel! (*She runs into library, laughing.*)

(Enter GORDON from veranda.)

GORDON (*looking after POLLY*). Have our young friends confessed? Or are they still lingering over the taste of stolen waters?

BESS (*prosaically*). They've announced their engagement, if that's what you mean. (*Goes down L. and sits.*)

GORDON (*sighing with exaggerated relief*). A-ah! I'm glad to hear it! I felt like an accomplice.

BESS (*indignantly*). You didn't listen!

GORDON (*down R.*). After you had commanded me to stop my ears? Certainly not!

BESS (*cynically*). If one were uncharitable, one might infer that it's just as well that I was there to insist upon the observance of the—decencies.

GORDON (*reflectively*). Well, it's always interesting to know how another man does that sort of thing.

BESS. Indeed? Have you had a wide experience as critic as well as in the leading role?

GORDON (*whimsically*). On the contrary! There lies my complaint. Why should a woman, who never needs to take the initiative in matters of that sort, have the

sole opportunity of hearing a variety of proposals of marriage? She simply gains a lot of knowledge and experience that she can never use, while a man, awkward at best, never hears any proposals but those he makes himself. He, therefore, is forced to depend upon his own main strength and stupidity, at a moment when he needs all the wisdom of the sages, the perception of the seers, and the charm of the sirens to aid him!

BESS. Which explains in part, I suppose, the fact that some men are widely known as having proposed to every woman who would listen to them? "Practice makes perfect"—is that it?

GORDON (*joining her*). Miss Maynard, would you—I mean, do you—that is, is a woman going to be hard on a fellow just because he's amused a few girls and done his best to live up to their expectations?

BESS. Mr. McAllister!

GORDON (*puts chair near her and sits*). Yes, I know, but now I'm in dead earnest! You know there are girls who—well, who like to amuse themselves and be amused. You're not one of them—you never were one of that sort (*BESS conceals a smile*), but—is it going against a man that he's done his best to furnish amusement for them?

BESS (*with mock gravity*). Is the subject one that impresses you as suitable material for—amusement?

GORDON. No—no, of course, not to a woman of your sort: But you see, Miss Maynard, there are so blessed few women like you! I never knew another! I—I wish you'd answer me? Would you be hard on a fellow under those circumstances?

BESS (*rising*). I hope I should never be hard, as you call it, on any one, Mr. McAllister, but I should hesitate a long time before I considered seriously anything that might be said to me by a man who had formed the proposal *habit*. There's Polly on the veranda. Shall we join her? (*She goes quickly off. GORDON looks after her, groans, despondently shakes his head, and follows slowly.*)

CECILY and OWEN enter from the library, both looking troubled. She carries the card envelope. They come down c.)

CECILY. And he made no explanation at all?

OWEN. None whatever. It doesn't seem to me there's much to be said, is there? The fact remains that he made a blooming young idiot of himself over Marie Doulton for two solid years and beggared himself sending her flowers and fruit and candy—the only reason it wasn't jewels was that she wouldn't accept them—and now that she's come back, within twenty-four hours of her arrival he begins it again, although he's just become engaged to one of the most charming girls on earth. There isn't much to be said in explanation of that, is there? It isn't as if he could afford to throw roses around.

CECILY (*miserably*). No, I suppose not. But, oh, poor little Polly! You'll send them, Owen?

OWEN (*grimly*). Oh, yes, I'll send them!

CECILY. I wonder—Did he write on the card?

OWEN. I don't know.

CECILY. I suppose it wouldn't do to look?

OWEN. Cecily!

CECILY (*hurriedly*). Oh, no, I wouldn't *do* it, dear! Only (*tearfully*) I'm thinking about Polly! Poor, poor little Polly! And she's going home to make her trousseau!

OWEN. Well, don't say anything about this to any one for the present, Cecily. We'll give Ken a chance to say whatever he has to say before we mention it. Young rascal! I'd like to thump him! (*Looks at his watch.*) Good-bye.

CECILY (*going to the hall with him*). Good-bye, dear. (*She disappears in the hall for a moment, and re-enters at once, coming down.*)

GORDON enters from the veranda and strolls restlessly about, occasionally turning toward her as he makes a point.

GORDON (*dejectedly*). Hello, Cecily. Say, Cecily,

you've always been a good friend of mine. Why didn't you tell me years ago that I was making a donkey of myself, and shut me off?

CECILY (*puzzled*). Eh?

GORDON (*playing with a book*). Why did you let me go on making love to every pretty little idiot I met? Didn't I deserve better at your hands than that? (*Throws book on table.*) What did I ever do to you?

CECILY (*demurely*). Well, you proposed to me three times. (*Sits down R.*)

GORDON. I know; just so you'd know when not to believe a fellow. You knew I didn't mean it, and I knew you knew it; and maybe I saved you a heartache some time. Maybe you'd have believed some other fool if I hadn't trained you, instead of keeping your heart all sweet and sound for Owen.

CECILY (*laughing a little*). Well, then, maybe that's the reason I didn't "shut you off," as you say. Perhaps you've been a public benefactor all these years, Gordon.

GORDON. Hang the public! What do I care about the public? When I finally meet a woman whom—whom I do—well, whom I do love! There!—and want to marry her, she's heard all these stories of my idiotic past, and imagines my heart's a worm-eaten old nut, not even worth the cracking!

CECILY. Merciful powers! Is it Bess?

GORDON (*savagely*). Is it Bess? Of course it's Bess! (*CECILY laughs.*) Who else could it be? And I don't see anything to laugh at, either! I tell you, Cecily, I'm in dead earnest about this!

CECILY (*laughing*). Oh, Gordon, to think of it! After all these years!

GORDON. I suppose you thought I was going on making a buffoon of myself for ever, did you? I suppose you thought I hadn't any heart, did you? I suppose you thought—oh, thunder! What do I care what you thought! I want to know what I'm going to do!

CECILY (*wiping tears of laughter from her eyes*). Have you proposed to her?

GORDON (*sulkily*). No.

CECILY (*wonderingly*). Well, why don't you?

GORDON. Don't know how. Don't know what to say. (CECILY (*shrieks with laughter*.) Well, I don't!

CECILY. And you have been celebrated, ever since I can remember, as making the most artistic proposals of any man in the whole country-side!

GORDON (*joins her*). I know that. But I want to make one now that somebody'll believe. You never believed 'em. Nobody ever believed 'em. Besides, I don't want to make an "artistic proposal"! She'd laugh at me and tell me I had acquired the "proposal habit"!

CECILY. Well, so you have.

GORDON. I deny it! If I had, I'd know what to say to her. (*Sits near her confidentially*). Say, Cecily, what did Owen say to you?

CECILY (*trying somewhat unsuccessfully to subdue her laughter*). He said—let me see! Why, I don't remember. I don't think he said much of anything. I guess it was more what he did.

GORDON. Well, what did he do?

CECILY. Gordon!

GORDON. I know; but I've helped you out of many a tight place, Cecily—and you were never as badly caught as I am. If you love me, if you love—her, if you love Owen, or—or *anybody*, give me a lift!

CECILY (*rising, trying to speak gravely*). Well, I will, Gordon. Truly, I will; but not now. I've got something else to do now. But I'll think about it.

GORDON (*who had risen when she die*). Well, hurry up! And say, CECILY—don't tell Owen! (CECILY *laughs again*.) I know (*ruefully*); I suppose it is funny. But wait a bit, won't you?

CECILY. Yes, I promise. I won't tell. Oh (*suddenly grave*), here come Polly and Bess now.

(Enter BESS, from hall, in street dress, followed by POLLY.)

BESS. I'm off for town, CECILY. Can I do anything for you?

CECILY. I didn't know you were going.

BESS. I'm going to see Marie Doulton.

CECILY (*coldly*). Oh!

POLLY. Tell her we're all coming to see her play to-morrow night.

BESS. Yes, I will. Good-bye. (*Exit BESS. GORDON looks after her for a moment, and then, with dogged deliberation, follows her.*)

POLLY. Oh, I can hardly wait to see her! You never saw her, did you?

CECILY. No, and I don't want to.

POLLY. Why not?

CECILY (*turning away*). Oh—because.

POLLY (*lightly*). Woman's reason. Because what?

CECILY (*up L.*). I don't like her.

POLLY (*down R., laughing*). Cecily, I believe you are jealous!

CECILY. Jealous! Of what?

POLLY. Because Owen was in love with her once.

CECILY. Owen in love with her!

POLLY. Why, yes! Mercy! Didn't you know it? Bess told me.

CECILY (*coming swiftly down to POLLY*). Bess told you that Owen was in love with Marie Doulton?

POLLY. Oh, I'm sorry I told, if you didn't know it. Cecily! I thought Owen told you everything.

CECILY. He does. What did she say?

POLLY. Oh, don't let's talk about it!

CECILY. *What did she say?*

POLLY (*miserably*). She said that for some time—ever so long ago, you know—Owen was simply infatuated with Marie Doulton, and that he sent her flowers and fruit and candy—

CECILY (*relieved*). Oh, no, that was Ken!

POLLY. *Ken!*

CECILY. Oh, good heavens! I didn't mean to tell you just yet, dear, but you'd have to know it within a few hours anyway, so it doesn't make very much difference.

POLLY. Have to know what?

CECILY. About Ken.

POLLY. What about Ken?

CECILY (*kindly*). Why, you see, Ken was very much in love with Marie Doulton a few years ago, and nearly beggared himself sending her things——

POLLY. No, that was Owen!

CECILY. Wait, dear! But everybody thought that was all over. I don't think he has seen her since she went on the stage—(*doubtfully*) I don't *think* he has—and he was quite a boy when all this happened. So when he fell in love with you, we were all perfectly delighted. Oh, if I could only have known!

POLLY. Known what? Cecily, what *are* you talking about?

CECILY. This morning just before we told Owen of your engagement, he found out that Ken was sending flowers to Marie Doulton.

POLLY. Flowers? Well, what of it? Everybody sends flowers to people.

CECILY. Oh, poor Polly! I'm so sorry! I—I wish it weren't true, but it is, and you must try to be brave about it, dear! He sent her five dozen American Beauties.

POLLY. Five dozen! I don't believe it!

CECILY. Yes, dear, it's true. He told Owen to order them for him at Bauer's.

POLLY. And was that the reason——

CECILY. That Owen seemed worried? Yes, that's the reason.

POLLY. Oh, there's some mistake! It couldn't be Ken! Why, Bess said it was Owen who was so much in love with her! She said he told her all about it, because she was such a friend of Miss Doulton's.

CECILY. Owen told Bess?

POLLY. Yes. Oh, you won't mind, Cecily! You mustn't mind, because he loves you now! But it must have been Owen!

CECILY. Well, it isn't Owen who's sending her five dozen roses to-day, anyway. It's Ken, for I saw the envelope that was to go with them, addressed in his writing. But—Polly, do you suppose Owen *was* in love with her?

POLLY (*in breaking tones*). Oh, Cecily! Oh, Cecily, I want to go home! I want to go home! (*She drops into a chair, sobbing piteously. CECILY, with quivering lips, watches her for a moment, and then, kneeling beside her, gathers POLLY into her arms, and they weep together.*)

CURTAIN.

ACT II

EVENING

The scene is the same.

Enter CECILY from the library, dressed for dinner. She takes up OWEN'S photograph, studies it, wipes away a tear and sighs. POLLY, also dressed for dinner, comes in from the hall and looks over CECILY'S shoulder.

CECILY (*mournfully*). He doesn't look as if he'd deceive his wife, does he?

POLLY. No, but one can't tell. I—I'd have trusted Ken anywhere! In the face of anything! (*Sobs.*)

CECILY (*tremulously*). Now, Polly, don't give way again. You must be brave, you know, and whatever you do, don't let him see that it hurts! It—it's easier for you than for me, you see, for you—you haven't

been married (*swallowing a sob*); and—and *I'm* not giving way! (*Puts photograph on table again.*)

POLLY. No, but Owen hasn't been sending her flowers! I don't see why you care so much. I wouldn't care how many girls Ken had been in love with, if I were sure that he loved me better than any of them now. But to have him sending her flowers—*such* flowers, too—the very day after he told me—that that—— (*Sobs.*)

CECILY. But Owen has told me ever so many times that I was the only woman he ever really loved! Of course, I knew he had had his little flirtations like other fellows, but I never supposed they were—like that!

POLLY. Now, Cecily, don't give up! Don't! After all the trouble we took to cover up the traces, we mustn't cry any more! We might just as well laugh! It won't do any good to cry. Let's laugh! (*She laughs sobbingly, and wipes her eyes.*) Has Bess come home yet?

CECILY. Yes; I think she's asleep, though. I rapped on her door, and she didn't answer. I wish she'd come down.

POLLY. But you won't try to talk about this now, will you? You mustn't, for you'd cry, and you know we agreed that we'd go through dinner just as usual.

CECILY. Oh, yes, just as usual! We'll show them that other people can feel one thing and act another.

(*Enter Bess, in dinner dress, looking troubled. She comes down C.*)

CECILY. Oh, Bess, I'm so glad you've come!

BESS (*taking CECILY'S hand sympathetically*). You dear girl! You look tired, Cecily.

CECILY (*turning away to hide tears*). Oh, I've such a headache!

POLLY (*also turning away*). So've I!

BESS (*sighing*). So've I! (*Sits down L.*)

CECILY. Did you have a pleasant day?

BESS. No; horrid!

CECILY (*down R.*) So did I!

POLLY (*up c*). So did I!

CECILY (*looking away from BESS*). Did you see—Miss Doultton?

BESS. Yes I don't think the stage has improved her any.

CECILY (*turning swiftly toward her*). Don't you? Why?

BESS. No, I don't! She's grown so—careless! There was a time when she wouldn't accept even flowers—awfully expensive ones, you know—from—well, from men who had no business to send them!

POLLY (*stifling a sob*). From engaged men.

BESS (*glancing hastily at CECILY*). Yes, or—from married men.

CECILY (*impulsively*). Bess, is it true that Owen was in love with her?

BESS (*reproachfully*). Polly!

POLLY (*hurriedly*). I thought she knew about it, Bess, or I wouldn't have told her.

CECILY. Is it true?

BESS (*reluctantly*). Well—he *was* rather attentive to her for a time. (*Rises uneasily.*)

CECILY (*joining BESS down L.*). And is it true that he sent her things all the time—flowers and candy and all that—and—and just *dangled* after her?

BESS (*impulsively*). Yes, he did! It is true!

POLLY (*eagerly as she comes down*). Then it was Owen after all, and not Ken?

BESS. No, it was—both of them.

CECILY. Both of them!

POLLY. Both of them!

BESS. Yes, both of them. For a long time they were rivals, and—why, don't you remember, Cecily, that for several months Owen and Ken were hardly on speaking terms? It was only after Owen became engaged to you that Ken really forgave him.

CECILY. And was that the reason?

BESS. That was the reason. They were both in love with her.

CECILY. And he never told me! He said I was the only woman he had ever loved!

BESS (*bitterly, crossing to R.*) Well, that should have been enough! Any man who will say that to a woman, expecting her to believe it, is a confirmed flirt!

POLLY (*dolefully*). Yes, that's true! Ken told me that he had *liked* lots of girls, but that he had never cared deeply for one before, and—he was in love with her, too! And I'd have trusted Ken anywhere!

BESS. Oh, but Ken was only a boy! His devotion to her was rather funny—and really very pretty, too. It was intense while it lasted, but she's several years his senior, you know, so it wasn't very serious.

POLLY. Oh, but it was! And it is yet! He—he——
(*She bursts into tears and goes up stage.*)

BESS. Why, Polly!

CECILY. You see, POLLY has just learned that Ken sent Marie Doulton a magnificent bunch of roses this morning. (*She joins Polly, trying to comfort her.*)

BESS. What? Ken!

POLLY (*hysterically*). Yes, Ken.

CECILY. He asked Owen to order them for him, because he had to go to Centerville.

BESS. Roses!—You're sure it wasn't orchids?

CECILY. No, it was roses. Five dozen of the most expensive, he said.

BESS (*dropping into a chair*). For heaven's sake!

CECILY. And Owen told me about it. He was very angry.

BESS (*drily*). Oh, was he.

CECILY. Why, of course he was! Owen hates anything like that, you know.

BESS (*same tone*). Yes, I know.

CECILY. And I didn't mean to tell Polly, but it slipped out, and—she had to know it sooner or later, so it doesn't make much difference.

POLLY. And Cecily and I have been crying all day——

CECILY. Until we looked perfect frights——

POLLY. And then we bathed our eyes and dressed—

CECILY. Because we don't want them to suspect that we know until after dinner.

POLLY. We want to show them that we can be calm and dignified, even in the face of insult.

CECILY. So we're going through the dinner just as if nothing had happened—

POLLY (*tremulously*). We're going to be just as self-possessed as possible—

CECILY (*with a responsive tremor*). Y-y-yes, we're not going to sh-sh-shed a tear—(*She fumbles for her handkerchief.*)

POLLY. Nor show any emotion—

CECILY. Nor—nor anything! Where *is* my handkerchief? (*Exit hurriedly, sobbing.*)

POLLY (*dolefully, coming down c.*) Oh! Bess, isn't it awful!

BESS. It is that!

POLLY. Would you have believed it of Ken?

BESS. Ken? Oh, he's not so bad. It's Owen!

POLLY. Owen!

BESS. Yes, Owen. (*Joins POLLY, speaking hurriedly in confidential tone*). Look here, Polly, I didn't mean to say anything about it, but—I don't know what to do. I saw Owen buying orchids for Miss Doulton.

POLLY. Orchids!

BESS. A great big box of them. A pretty price they must have cost him!

POLLY. Maybe they were for Cecily.

BESS. (*scornfully*). For Cecily! Did you ever know a man to buy a box—so big (*illustrating*)—of orchids for his *wife*? Besides, I saw them in her room afterward.

POLLY. Did you see the roses, too? Ken never sent *me* five dozen American Beauties.

BESS. I don't know. Oh, yes, I suppose so! There were huge bunches of roses everywhere, but nothing compared with those orchids.

POLLY (*in tears*). Oh, Bess! Oh, poor Cecily! Aren't men horrid! What shall we do?

BESS (*looking toward door L.*). 'Sh, here she comes! Polly! 'Sh! We mustn't tell her!

POLLY. B-b-but I think she ought to know!

BESS (*doubtfully*). Do you?

POLLY. Yes, because if she finds out about it this time, it may prevent his doing it again.

BESS. Well—I must think. Do hush, Polly!

POLLY (*hysterically*). Oh, I ca-ca-a-a-an't!

BESS. Then run away!

(*Enter CECILY from the library, wearing a determined smile.*)

CECILY. Polly! You promised you wouldn't cry any more! Do go and bathe your eyes! (*Exit POLLY to hall, weeping bitterly. CECILY continues resolutely.*) Now, I'm going to be cheerful. Let me see! I had something on my mind to tell you. Oh, yes, it was Gordon!

BESS (*indifferently*). His weight can't have oppressed you much! (*Goes to table and selects a book.*)

CECILY. Now, Bess, don't be hard on Gordon! He's a dear!

BESS. To how many girls?

CECILY. Well, as he says himself, he's been sort of a public benefactor. He's prevented a lot of us from throwing ourselves away on other fellows.

BESS. Who wants to marry a safety-valve?

CECILY. But you see, the difference is just here. He never cared a thing in the world about one of us, and we all knew it; but he's desperately in love with you. You're the only woman he ever did love. He told me so himself.

BESS (*irritably tossing book aside*). Good heavens! It's bad enough to have a man say that to one in the privacy of a proposal, but when he goes about advertising it to one's friends——!

CECILY. But it's true! I've known Gordon for years, and you're the only girl he ever knew to whom he was

afraid to propose.

BESS (*coming down L.*). Is the man so sure I'd accept him?

CECILY. Oh, Bess, don't be horrid! Gordon would make such a good husband!

BESS. What am I that a miracle should be worked for me?

CECILY (*faintly smiling*). Do you think it would be so hard for him to be a good husband?

BESS. No harder than for any other man, I suppose.

CECILY (*persuasively, joining BESS*). Bess, sometimes I think you're getting bitter. You mustn't do that! There are some horrid men in the world, but there are some splendid ones, too! Now, there's Owen! Of course, he isn't perfect—if he were, I don't know what he'd do with me!—and I'm impatient with him sometimes, but—just the same, Owen is such a dear, faithful, considerate, unselfish fellow! I'd like to see you as happily married as I am!

BESS (*irrepressibly*). Heaven forfend!

CECILY. Why, Bess! You like Owen! You know he's splendid! Now, don't you? . . . Bess! You do, don't you? (*She touches Bess's shoulder persuasively.*)

BESS (*choking with tears*). Don't, Cecily! Let me go!

CECILY (*holding BESS's arm*). Bess! Bess! What do you mean? What is it? Tell me! (*BESS shakes her head and tries in vain to pull away.*) You shall tell me! What is it?

BESS. Nothing!

(*Enter POLLY from hall.*)

CECILY. It is! It's something about Owen! Isn't it? (*Shakes BESS a little.*) Isn't it? Do you know anything *more* about Owen that I don't know? Bess!

POLLY (*up c.*). Oh, tell her, Bess! She'll find out some day, anyway, and then we'll wish we had warned her now.

CECILY. Polly! You know?

BESS (*dully*). Yes, Polly knows. (*Crosses to R.*) I saw Owen buying an immense box of orchids at Bauer's—

CECILY. Roses, you mean.

BESS. No, I don't; I mean orchids. And later, I saw the same box brought to Marie Doulton.

CECILY. Oh—oh, there's some mistake! He bought them for Ken.

POLLY (*bursting into tears again*). Ken ordered roses! Oh, and I'd have trusted Ken through anything! (*Flings herself into chair, near table, up L.*)

BESS. When Marie opened them, I said: "What magnificent flowers!" and she laughed and replied: "Yes; poor boy! He still sends them." I said: I saw him buying them. Do you think you have any right to accept them—now?" and she laughed again, in a careless sort of way, and said: "Well, I've told him not to send them, but he will do it; and what woman could refuse flowers like that?"

CECILY (*breathlessly*). Bess!

BESS. And then I came away. I—I couldn't stay in the room with them!

CECILY (*piteously*). Oh, Bess!

BESS. And that's all. (*POLLY sobs and CECILY stares straight before her, as if stunned.*) And I thank heaven (*a little wildly*) that I'm not married to any man! (*Sobs chokingly and goes toward hall door.*)

POLLY. Bess! I believe you care for some one, too!

BESS (*hurriedly*). No, no, no! Not in the least! I assure you I do not! (*POLLY sobs disconsolately.*)

(*Enter GORDON, from the veranda. The girls all turn their faces away from him.*)

GORDON (*cheerfully in doorway*). Ah, I thought I heard voices! Why don't you come out on the veranda? It's fine! Well, I've got the seats for to-morrow night. We'll have a great time, eh? (*Looks from one to another.*) Why doesn't somebody say something? Overcome at the prospect of seeing the great beauty, Cecily?

CECILY. I—I shall not see her. I'm not going.
(*Exit hurriedly.*)

GORDON. Not going! Not going to see Marie Doulton? What's up? You wouldn't miss it, Miss Winslow?

POLLY. Nothing on earth would tempt me to go!
(*Exit hurriedly to library.*)

GORDON. Eh! Oh, I say! Why, see here, Miss Maynard, what does this mean? It's a joke, isn't it? They don't mean it seriously?

BESS (*coming down*). They mean it very seriously.

GORDON (*following her*). And you——?

BESS. I mean it also.

GORDON. By Jove! What's up?

BESS. We shall leave the contemplation of Miss Doulton's charms to the men of the household.

GORDON. Why, I thought she was a friend of yours!

BESS. She was—until to-day. (*Sits, wearily.*)

GORDON. Oh, I see! You—er—disagreed, and the girls are resenting it with you. Sort of a sympathetic strike. (*Pulls chair near her as if for a long chat.*)

BESS. On the contrary, I am only a sympathizer—but my sympathies are active!

GORDON. I'm glad to hear that, for I'm in need of them. I—I—oh, Bess, I can't lead up to it, but you must see how it is with me!

BESS. Oh, don't! (*Covers her face with her hands.*)

GORDON. I know. You think I'm a sublime fraud and not to be trusted——

BESS (*wearily, lifting her head*). Perhaps you're as much to be trusted as any man.

GORDON (*hopefully*). Bess!

BESS. But there's not a man on earth I'd trust to the extent of marrying him. Not one!

GORDON (*falling back disappointed*). Oh, Bess!

BESS (*a little wildly*). To you, we are all toys, kept for an otherwise idle hour. Your code is not our

code ; your ideals are not our ideals ; your honour—thank heaven!—is not our honour.

GORDON (*simply*). I don't think I understand.

BESS (*bitterly*). Perhaps your friends, Mr. Belknap and Mr. Moore, will explain.

GORDON (*rising and walking restlessly about*). I may have been unfortunate enough to have offended you (BESS *shakes her head*), or some other man, of whom I know nothing, may have destroyed your faith in him, but it is not just—nor is it like you—to condemn the innocent with the guilty. Some of us—most of us, perhaps—are not all that we might be, but Owen Belknap and Kenneth Moore are two as straight fellows as the Lord ever made!

BESS (*rising*). Which completes the circle and brings us back to the starting-point.

GORDON (*confronting her*). Do you mean to tell me that you would not trust Owen?

BESS. I do.

GORDON. Nor Ken?

BESS. I do.

GORDON. Of course, you think you have reason?

BESS. I have reason.

GORDON (*shaking his head*). There's some mistake. Owen and Ken are absolutely to be trusted.

BESS (*impulsively*). Which is the reason that Kenneth, who was madly in love with Marie Doulton for two years, sent her a magnificent bunch of roses to-day, far more costly than his means justify, although his engagement to Polly Winslow was announced only this morning!

GORDON. What!

BESS. This is quite true. Cecily saw the envelope, holding Ken's card and addressed in his writing, which was to go with them, and Owen ordered the flowers at Ken's request.

GORDON. Owen ordered the flowers! But don't you see, that in itself is Kenneth's vindication! The fact that he told Owen proves——

BESS (*hopefully*). Oh, do you think so? (*Dejectedly*.) Owen doesn't take that view of it.

GORDON. Do you mean to say that Owen believes—? (*BESS nods.*) But surely he disapproved?

BESS (*sarcastically*). Oh, yes, he disapproved—violently! He said various condemnatory things to Cecily—and then went and ordered a box of orchids for Miss Doulton that completely overshadowed Ken's roses. I happened to see him selecting them.

GORDON. They couldn't have been for Miss Doulton. They must have been for Cecily.

BESS. Unfortunately, I was with Miss Doulton when they arrived.

GORDON. Then he substituted orchids for roses in filling Ken's order.

BESS. To what purpose? Ken said roses; and the shops are full of them. You may not know that Owen, also, was very much in love with Miss Doulton at one time. In fact, he and Kenneth had a very bitter quarrel about her.

GORDON (*shakes his head and begins to wander about again, stopping an instant wherever he makes a point*).

There's some absurd mistake in all this. Kenneth's a good deal of a kid—but he's not a *cad*; and as for Owen—oh, it's impossible! Did you see Owen's card with the orchids?

BESS. It wasn't necessary. I saw him select and pay for them; and Miss Doulton admitted that she had forbidden him to continue sending them, but said he *would* do it.

GORDON. I tell you, there's some mistake!

BESS. How about the roses that Ken asked Owen to order? I suppose that's a mistake, too?

GORDON (*still walking about*). I still think that the very fact that he confided in Owen proves the integrity of his motive.

BESS (*going toward library door*). He probably counted on the honour that prevails among thieves—(*bitterly*) and Owen failed him, even there!

GORDON. I'll never believe it until they tell me themselves . . . I suppose Cecily and Miss Winslow know all this?

BESS (*stops near door*). Yes.

GORDON (*gravely*). And is this the cause of your bitter denunciation of all men?

BESS. Isn't it enough? If Owen and Ken are not to be trusted——

GORDON (*again confronting her*). But they are to be trusted! Believe me, they are! (BESS *shakes her head, but less positively*). If I prove it—if I prove that this is all a mistake, will you grant, also, that perhaps I am more earnest than I have been painted, and give me a chance?

BESS (*faltering*). But I saw——

GORDON. Never mind what you saw! If I prove that Owen and Ken are trustworthy, will you trust me, too?

BESS. If you can prove that Ken did not order five dozen roses sent to Marie Doulton this morning, and if you can prove that Owen did not send the orchids that I saw him pay for, that I saw delivered, and that she admitted she ought not to accept—I'll——

GORDON. Yes?

BESS (*laughing nervously*). I'll believe anything else you choose to tell me! (*Exit to library.*)

GORDON (*comes down, hands in pockets and head bowed*). Whew! (*Sits down R. and shakes his head dubiously.*)

(*Enter KENNETH from the veranda. He moves toward library without noticing GORDON.*)

GORDON. Hullo, you young jackanapes! Where've you been all day?

KENNETH (*at c. disgustedly*). Centerville. Where are the girls?

GORDON. Well, you'd better have been at home, 'tending to your knitting work.

KENNETH. Couldn't help it. It was business.

(Enter POLLY from the library. GORDON rises.)

KENNETH. That idiot of an agent up there—oh, here's Polly! (Goes eagerly toward her.)

POLLY (coldly, avoiding him). Good evening. (Crosses to door R. and stands looking out.)

KENNETH. Eh? I say, what's up?

GORDON (down R. watching keenly). As I said, Kenneth, you dropped a stitch and your knitting work got tangled in your absence. Now, how about—

(Enter CECILY from the hall.)

KENNETH (interrupting GORDON on "how," eagerly). Hullo, Cecily! What's wrong? (CECILY turns her back on him.) Well, by Jove, I think you might tell a fellow!

GORDON. I'm trying, with what patience is in me, to explain—

(Enter OWEN from the veranda. He carries a box of carnations.)

KENNETH. I say, Owen! What's wrong?

OWEN (going at once to CECILY). Well, sweetheart? (She slips past him, with a reproachful glance, and comes down L. OWEN follows.) What's the matter, dear? Here; I brought you some carnations. (Her glance becomes scornful and she steps back.) Why, what's the matter?

KENNETH (at c.). Well, that's what I want to know! Here I come in, after a deuce of a day at Centerville, and they all treat me as if I were a convict! And you seem to be equally unpopular! Oh, here comes Bess!

(Enter BESS from the hall.)

KENNETH. Say, Bess, what's wrong?

BESS (in doorway). You'd better ask what's right? It would indicate a more hopeful condition of your moral sense!

OWEN. But see here—!

KENNETH. Well, I swear! Gordon, do you know anything about this?

GORDON. No; but I hope to untangle it. It's primarily about some orchids, I believe.

KENNETH (*puzzled*). Orchids!

GORDON. Now, this is Owen's knitting work, Ken. You keep out.

OWEN. Well, what about them?

GORDON. You sent some to Miss Doulton?

OWEN. No, *I* didn't send them. That is—
(*Hesitates.*)

BESS (*up c.*) Owen Belknap!

GORDON (*patiently*). Now, if you please, Miss Maynard, this is *my* demonstration. Yours will come later—I hope. (BESS *bites her lip.*) Now, Owen? You didn't send them?

OWEN. No, I—well (*glancing at POLLY*), I'd rather not explain here. What about them, anyway?

GORDON. Well, if you have any explanation to offer, you'd better get about it. Right here, too. A hypothetical cat seems to have escaped from an equally hypothetical bag, but there's no secret about it. I'm right, ladies? There's no secrecy? Now, Owen.

OWEN (*troubled*). But—you see— (He *hesitates and looks at KENNETH.*)

KENNETH. Out with it, Owen! If you hold the key to this mystery, for heaven's sake, produce it!

OWEN. Well, it's simply this. I ordered those orchids at Ken's request, but why you should stand *me* up and—

CECILY. Oh, Owen!

KENNETH, I didn't say orchids! I said roses! (POLLY *bursts into tears, and 'turns to BESS, who comes down to her.*)

OWEN. I know you did. You said you wanted five dozen, of the choicest variety. You also informed me (*sarcastically*) that expense was no object, and as Bauer had not five dozen fine roses of one kind in his shop, and as he had some particularly good orchids, I thought I'd satisfy your desire for a large bill, so I ordered the orchids sent with your card. But I must say, Kenneth (*severely*)—

KENNETH (*aghast*). With *my* card!

CECILY (*patting OWEN'S arm*). Oh, I knew all the time there must be some such explanation! I didn't really believe it for a moment! Bess, you might have known!

POLLY (*sobbing*). And I'd have trusted Ken through *anything*!

KENNETH. Now, look here! You people don't think, for one minute——

CECILY. Oh, we all *know* what *you* did!

BESS. Polly, dear, don't! (*She tries to soothe sobbing POLLY.*)

KENNETH (*hotly*). I suppose you all think that because I ordered some roses sent to Marie Doulton, I'm a double-faced scoundrel, don't you?

CECILY. *Some* roses!

KENNETH. I suppose you've all been retailing the story of my youthful infatuation and sitting in judgment upon me, haven't you? You've even been torturing Polly about it—and (*sorrowfully*) she believed you!

CECILY. Well, but you told Owen——

KENNETH. Of course I told Owen! I'll tell all of you if you'll keep still long enough to hear it! I got a letter from Fred Grover this morning—he's down at his mother's, sick——

(POLLY *looks up, her face lighting.*)

CECILY. Oh, well, never mind——

GORDON. The defendant has the stand!

KENNETH. He said Marie has refused him again——

CECILY. Well, is that any reason why *you* should send her five dozen roses? Just after——

POLLY. Oh, Cecily, *do* keep still! Don't you see? They were for him!

KENNETH. That's it! They were for Fred!

POLLY. Oh, Ken!

CECILY. But the card!

KENNETH. Was his, I suppose. *I* didn't look at it? All I did was to put her address on the envelope.

POLLY. Oh, Ken! (*She runs off to the veranda, pursued by KENNETH.*)

CECILY. Then all this has been— Oh, Owen! (*She looks penitently at him and extends an entreating hand, which he takes tenderly. They disappear in the library.*)

GORDON. Miss Maynard, I submit that I have proved my case.

BESS (*going to L. C.*). Wasn't it rather—vicarious?

GORDON. Nevertheless, it is proved. *Now* will you believe——

BESS (*behind a chair, breathlessly, making one last stand for her convictions*). All but one thing. Don't ever attempt to convince me that—that——

GORDON (*eagerly impatient*). Well?

BESS. That I'm the *only* woman you ever loved!

GORDON (*with triumphant conviction*). But you are!

(*He steps toward her with outstretched arms.*)

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